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ABSTRACT

With the purpose of establishing a special English program at the University of Florida which would serve both teachers at the two-year community colleges and students preparing to teach at them, a five-man committee visited most of the state's 30 two-year colleges to discuss their needs and goals with faculty and administrators. Summer institutes designed specifically for community college teachers, and increased attendance at national conferences such as the College English Association and the Conference on College Composition and Communication provided further information. As a result, a flexible M. A. program has developed with these degree requirements: (1) six four-hour English courses, (2) five of the four-hour specifically community college courses, (3) an internship in teaching, (4) reading knowledge of one foreign language, and (5) a comprehensive written exam. In addition, experienced two-year college teachers are being used, graduate courses are offered at night, University of Florida faculty travel to community colleges to teach, and a close relationship has been established between the university and the community colleges. (JM)

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English and the Two-Year College

The purpose of this talk is to share with you what we have done at the University of Florida to meet the needs of English teachers in the two-year college, both in the state of Florida and elsewhere. I want to indicate the history of a program we have set up, the parts of this program that brought us the best results, and the prospects for the future.

1st, the background. In 1970 a five-man committee from our English Department began visiting most of the thirty community colleges in the state of Florida, met and talked with the faculty, the English Department chairmen, and administrators at each of the community colleges. We also had several summer institutes designed specifically for the community college teacher, following up each of these with a detailed report of what these community college teachers wanted at the university, how we could best serve them, what courses they felt were the most beneficial, etc.

The weekly trips we took around the state were extremely important in reestablishing the good will between the university and the community colleges in general, and the English Departments in particular---good will that had been lost over the years. We found at first that the two-year colleges were either hostile or indifferent to us. Because we had neglected the community college in our emphasis on graduate work and

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our belief that the Ph.D. was the only degree worth having, the community college had begun to look elsewhere, for example colleges of education, out-of-state universities that were more teacher-oriented, and private colleges. Our committee consisted of five men, all of whom happened to be over six feet tall, with our chairman, Ward Hellstrom, leading us at 6'8"; and three of us had beards. You can imagine the look on the face of many a chairman, especially if he happened to be 5'2" or something, when he saw us enter his office.

We also found that the approach of a number of four-year schools, namely the questionnaire, was unsatisfactory either because a questionnaire cannot tell you all you need to know about individual situations or simply because so many chairmen of the two-year colleges would throw it in the wastebasket, and perhaps rightly so. The main point I want to emphasize in this talk is the importance of visiting the two-year colleges. It is only through this kind of articulation that a meaningful, relevant program can be set up, and one that the two-year colleges will be more interested in since they were primarily responsible for how it was made up.

At first, we did not know a great deal of what to say to the community college teachers on our weekly trips, but as time went on we found that we were learning more and more about the colleges, what they wanted, what they didn't want, and how we could best serve them. We found that they did not want the typical research-oriented Ph.D. with his attitude: "Well, o.k., I'll teach some of your freshman comp. courses, but what I really want is to become the

Milton expert at this particular community college." These chairmen often felt that they had to "retrain" our Ph.D.'s and get them out of the library and more into the classroom. They thus preferred the M.A. who had had some experience in teaching.

We also began attending national conferences, for example the CEA and the 4 C's, and encouraged more and more of our faculty to attend the twice-yearly meetings of the Florida chapter of the CEA to get better acquainted with our counterparts at the two-year colleges. We wanted to find out exactly how we should set up a community-college program at the university. What we did not want to do do was to turn out more and more teachers into an already-glutted market. What we did not want was to offer another degree, whether it was the Doctor of Arts or the M.A.T. What we did want was to be as much help as possible to the teachers already in the field.

As a result of this, in the last two years we have set up an M.A. in English with a concentration in community-college teaching. The requirements of this degree are: six 4-hour English courses, five 4-hour courses from those designed specifically for the community college, and an internship in teaching. Students must also have a reading knowledge of one foreign language and take a comprehensive written exam. The courses designed specifically for the community college are the following:

a course in communications and pop culture

a course in how to teach business and technical writing

an introduction to linguistics and how it can be used in in the classroom

several courses in the film: how to teach the film, how to use film in literature classes, how to set up film courses in the community college

a course in how to teach creative writing

and several courses in the teaching of reading

We offer at least three of these courses each term, often at night for the convenience of commuters. We also encourage our students to take electives dealing with the two-year college from the Education Department. The reason we set up these particular courses is because those are what the community colleges wanted. The program is flexible enough to fit any changing needs of the community college in the future.

One of the main aids in setting up this program was the 4 C's Guidelines for Junior College English Teacher Training Programs. One of the main points that these guidelines recommend is that these programs use experienced community-college teachers in the courses. We have done this. This year, for example, we have added to our faculty an associate professor from Miami-Dade Junior College, who will teach undergraduate courses in composition and the film and graduate courses in film add composition for teachers. In addition he has conducted this past fall a faculty seminar in composition. The faculty and graduate students who teach freshman comp. meet once a week with this professor and discuss methods of effectively teaching writing to the undergraduates.

We have also taken steps to make our programs more appealing to community-college teachers. For example, we teach a number of graduate courses at night. We have also had our faculty travel to community colleges to teach courses; it is easier for one of us to travel 40 or 50 miles than to have 5-10 teachers come to our campus. We have simplified the usual red tape of registration, often taking the community-college teachers through the registration ourselves. We have gotten to the point where two-year college teachers around the state know they can call us up for help either for their own course or registration problems or to see how their own former students are doing at the university.

For our own graduate students who are planning on community-college teaching, we have required a teaching internship to give them experience in teaching freshman composition. We have also put more of these students on our college and departmental committees, as suggested by the 4 C's Guidelines, since an important part of their duties at the two-year college will be committee work. We have also taken these students with us on our periodic trips to the community colleges to meet with chairmen and teachers and thus become better acquainted with the two-year college. They also observe on their own at community colleges throughout the state and take their internships in two-year colleges under the supervision of community-college teachers.

Last spring we hosted a conference to which administrators and faculty came from each of the nine southeastern states. At this we discussed, among other things, the development of a Humanities program and the training of future community-college teachers.

Several of the conclusions are relevant to our discussion today:

1st, the M.A. or Ph.D. student should be allowed to write a thesis which is concerned more with pedagogical matters than those that have been allowed in the past. Consequently the university should have faculty members who are qualified to direct such theses.

2) students in English graduate programs who plan on teaching in the community college should be encouraged to become versed in more than one field, for example English and either the Humanities or speech or music or a foreign language, etc.

3) universities should reconsider the year-long residence requirement, common to many Ph.D. programs. While many two-year colleges give leaves of absence to faculty members to complete their advanced degrees, the residency requirement often deters a teacher from finishing his Ph.D.

4) universities should offer more graduate courses at night or on Saturdays to allow teachers to commute to the campus. They should teach graduate courses when possible on two-year college campuses; and they should also allow in-service teachers to spend two or three summer terms at the university to satisfy the residency requirements.

5) the universities should confer with the two-year colleges in advance to see what courses would be most attractive to their teachers who would be taking summer courses at the university; they should perhaps offer more of these courses in the spring term when the reduced enrollments at those colleges might enable their administrators to release some of their teachers for advanced work at the university.

Let me conclude by reemphasizing the importance of visiting the community-college campuses. This can be invaluable for maintaining a close working relationship between the university and the community college and for coordinating the higher education and training of our students. The two-year college and the four-year university are in the same profession: that of educating our students. With more cooperation we can offer our students and ourselves a brighter future.